

Adoption Day in Michigan

Michigan is celebrating adoptive families and efforts to place children in adoptive homes during the fourth annual Michigan Adoption Day today.

The event is expected to be the nation's largest Adoption Day event for the fourth year in a row.

It is co-sponsored by the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Michigan Supreme Court, and the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange.

Along with the special celebrations today, Gov. Jennifer Granholm has proclaimed November as Adoption Month in Michigan, and the Supreme Court has issued a resolution declaring that today is Michigan Adoption Day.

"Adoptive families have made a loving decision that will pay dividends now and in the future," Granholm said in a written statement. "There is nothing more precious than the growth and development of our youths, who will determine the future direction of our state."

"Michigan Adoption Day is one of the most joyous days of the year with children and adults celebrating the choice of love and to become part of a forever family," said Michigan Department of Human Services Director Marianne Udow.

"Our new family to family approach to foster children creates a tremendous need for foster and adoptive parents in all communities," said Udow. "Adoption Day provides tangible proof of the joy that forever families create."

Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Clifford W. Taylor said that the celebration should also serve as a reminder of "the many other children who still need permanent homes. For their sakes, we need many more Adoption Days. We hope this event will inspire many good candidates to serve as adoptive and foster parents."

While Michigan Department of Human Services and state courts strive to reunite children with their birth parents, doing so is not always in the child's best interest.

Courts may terminate parental rights in cases of child abuse and neglect.

There are more than 6,100 children whose birth parents rights have been terminated.

About 4,400 of these children have adoption as part of the child's permanency plan.

Many of them have special needs as the result of physical, mental or emotional impairments.

Many children who are waiting for a family are older, members of minorities, or have siblings.

In fiscal year 2005, 2,883 children with special needs were adopted, Udow reported.

Adoption statistics:

— The goal of Michigan's Adoption Services Program is to place children in adoption as quickly as possible following termination of parental rights.

— Whenever possible, adoptive placements are made with families that already have an existing

relationship or attachment to the child (relatives and foster parents), and every effort is made to keep siblings together.

— 2,883 children were adopted through Department of Human Services' offices and private adoption agencies between Oct. 1, 2004 and Sept. 30, 2005.

— A relative or foster parent adopted 92 percent of those children.

— 80 percent of children who had siblings in foster care were adopted with at least one of their siblings.

— Preliminary data for fiscal year 2006 indicates that approximately 2,550 children were placed into adoptive homes out of the foster care system between Oct. 1, 2005 and Sept. 30, 2006.

— Today there are approximately 6,200 children in the foster care system whose parents' rights have been terminated.

— For approximately 4,500 of those children, the goal is adoption. The remaining children are either older youths who are satisfied with their placement and do not wish to be adopted (those 14 years of age and older have that option) or youths in other living arrangements where adoption is not appropriate.

— During the four year period that Michigan has celebrated Adoption Day, more than 10,600 children have been placed into adoptive homes out of foster care.

— Many children who are available for adoption qualify for adoption assistance to help families with some of the costs of bringing children into their homes through adoption. Adoption assistance may consist of support subsidy (financial support), medical subsidy (payment for certain remedial services) and assistance with the administrative costs of processing and adoption.

— While not all children are eligible for adoption assistance, for eligible children, adoption assistance may continue to be available until the child turns 18 years of age.

— More than 25,000 adopted children are eligible for ongoing support subsidy.

— Children receiving adoption assistance generally have special circumstances that make finding an appropriate adoptive home more challenging — they may be older children, members of a racial or ethnic minority, part of a sibling group, or have physical, mental or emotional impairments.

— The total amount of adoption support subsidy paid to adoptive families by the state of Michigan is approximately \$208 million annually.

For more information:

— For more information on children awaiting adoption in Michigan go to **www.mare.org**.

— For more information on children awaiting adoption in the U.S. go to **www.adoptUSkids.org**.

— For more information on public adoption policies and data go to **www.michigan.gov/dhs** and click on "Adoption."